

## **NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH AND THE ABILITYONE PROGRAM**

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and is an opportunity to highlight the AbilityOne Program (formerly known as the Javits-Wagner-O'Day "JWOD" Program). Created in 1938, this unique Federal procurement program has provided employment to thousands of individuals with severe disabilities, enabling them to lead more productive and independent lives. Under the AbilityOne Program, supplies and services purchased by DOE and other Federal agencies generate jobs for nearly 48,000 Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities at more than 600 community-based nonprofit agencies across the country. The AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. Total sales under the AbilityOne Program exceed \$1 billion annually. Employment opportunities made possible through the AbilityOne Program equip tens of thousands of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities with the job skills and training necessary to earn equitable wages, benefits, and greater independence.

President Bush has noted, "All of our citizens should have the opportunity to live and work with dignity and freedom. Every October, we observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month, to recognize the talents, skills, and dedication of people with disabilities who are a vital part of our work force." Not only are people who are blind or have other severe disabilities a vital part of the American workforce, but under the AbilityOne Program they are also essential suppliers of products and services to the Federal Government and U.S. Armed Forces.

The AbilityOne Program, as part of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month, is intended to raise awareness and to recognize the crucial role played by Federal personnel, whose purchases of AbilityOne items contribute to the Program's success. This is an ideal time for DOE personnel to revisit their procurement needs and renew their interest in supporting the AbilityOne Program. This Program provides Federal personnel with quality supplies and services, on time, at reasonable prices.

Please learn more about this program at [www.abilityone.gov](http://www.abilityone.gov). The DOE liaison to the AbilityOne Program is Jeffrey Rubenstein, Office of Procurement and Assistance Management, (202) 287-1516.